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NASA Procedural Requirements

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Request Notification of Change

(NASA Only)

Subject: NASA Employee Performance Communication System (EPCS) - Change 6 (10/29/10)

Responsible Office: Office of Human Capital Management

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CHAPTER 3. Definitions

3.1 Acceptable Level of Competence (ALOC). Performance at the fully successful level or higher that justifies an increase to an employee's rate of basic pay to the next higher step of the grade or the next higher rate within the grade of the employee's position.

3.2 Appraisal Period. The one-year period, from May 1 through April 30, for which performance shall be appraised and a Rating of Record prepared.

3.3 Critical Element. A work assignment or responsibility of such importance that unacceptable (i.e., Fails to Meet Expectations) performance in that element would result in a determination that an employee's overall performance summary rating is Unacceptable. Such elements shall be used to measure performance only at the individual level (5 C.F.R. S 430.203).

3.4 Minimum Appraisal Period. The minimum amount of time that an employee must be under a performance plan before a Rating of Record can be assigned. This period is 90 calendar days.

3.5 Narrative Summary. A written, or otherwise recorded, summary that succinctly addresses an employee's significant performance achievement(s) or result(s) or observable behavior(s) relative to his/her performance elements and standards for the appraisal period.

3.6 NASA Employee Performance Communication System (EPCS). The specific responsibilities and requirements for planning, monitoring, developing, assessing, and rewarding employee performance established under the policies and parameters of NASA's performance management system.

3.7 Non-Critical Element. A dimension or aspect of individual, team, or organizational performance, exclusive of a critical element, that is used in assigning a performance summary rating level. Such elements may include, but are not limited to, objectives, goals, program plans, work plans, and other means of expressing expected performance (5 C.F.R. S 430.203). Failure on a non-critical element cannot be used as a basis for a performance-based action (e.g., reduction in grade or removal) (5 C.F.R. S 432.104) nor can the employee's performance be summarized as Unacceptable overall based on that failure (5 C.F.R. S 430.208(b)(2)). Note--non-critical does not mean not important.

3.8 Not Rated. A term, applicable only to a performance element, used when no performance element rating level can be assigned because the employee has had insufficient opportunity to demonstrate performance of the element, the element was removed from the performance plan, or for other similar reasons.

3.9 Performance. The accomplishment of the work assignments and responsibilities described in the employee's performance plan.

3.10 Performance Appraisal. The review and evaluation of an employee's performance against the performance elements and standards described in the employee's performance plan.

3.11 Performance Management System. The general policies and parameters under which the requirements of the EPCS to plan, monitor, develop, assess, and reward employee performance have been established. The NASA Performance Management System (also referred to as the NASA EPCS) was approved by OPM on April 23, 1996.

3.12 Performance Plan. All the written or otherwise recorded performance elements that describe what the employee is expected to accomplish during the appraisal period and the standards against which the employee's performance shall be appraised.

3.13 Performance Standard. An expression of a performance threshold, requirement, or expectation that is measurable and focused on results.

3.14 Progress Review. A Rating Official's and employee's review and documented discussion of the employee's performance, progress in meeting the performance elements and standards of the employee's performance plan, and training and development needs and requirements. A progress review does not result in a Rating of Record.

3.15 Rating Definitions.

3.15.1 Performance Element Rating Levels.

3.15.1.1 Significantly Exceeds Expectations. Performance that consistently exceeds the performance standards to an exceptional degree for the element.

3.15.1.2 Exceeds Expectations. Performance that consistently exceeds the performance standards to a high degree for the element.

3.15.1.3 Meets Expectations. Performance that fully and consistently meets the performance standards identified for the element.

3.15.1.4 Needs Improvement. Performance that does not fully meet the performance standards for the element.

3.15.1.5 Fails to Meet Expectations. Performance that fails to meet the established performance standards for the element.

3.15.2 Performance Summary Rating Levels (Pattern H) (5 C.F.R. S 430.208(d)).

3.15.2.1 Distinguished (Level 5). Performance when all elements are rated Significantly Exceeds Expectations.

3.15.2.2 Accomplished (Level 4). Performance when all elements are rated no lower than Exceeds Expectations.

3.15.2.3 Fully Successful (Level 3). Performance when no element is rated below Meets Expectations.

3.15.2.4 Needs Improvement (Level 2). Performance when any element is rated below Meets Expectations.

3.15.2.5 Unacceptable (Level 1). Performance when any critical element is rated Fails to Meet Expectations.

3.16 Rating Official. The individual (usually the immediate supervisor) who is responsible for:

3.16.1 Planning. Engaging the employee as a partner in the establishment of the employee's performance elements and standards.

3.16.2 Monitoring. Promoting two-way communications with the employee and providing constructive feedback relative to the employee's performance during the appraisal period.

3.16.3 Developing. Assessing the employee's training and development needs and requirements to improve good or poor performance and, when possible, providing educational, developmental, and growth opportunities.

3.16.4 Rating. Appraising in a fair, accurate, and timely manner the employee's performance against the performance plan at the end of the appraisal period.

3.16.5 Rewarding. When appropriate, fully and fairly utilizing awards and recognition to recognize the employee's performance and achievements.

3.17 Rating of Record. The written, or otherwise recorded, performance summary rating level assigned at the end of an appraisal period or when required by special circumstances. The Rating of Record must be supported by a narrative summary of the employee's performance.

3.18 Reviewing Official. The individual (usually the second-level supervisor) who must review and approve a performance summary rating of Distinguished, Needs Improvement, or Unacceptable. Center Directors and OICs may be both the Rating and Reviewing Official.

3.19 Supervisor. See Rating Official.

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